

The Canonization of the Pentateuch: When and Why? (Part I)*

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I. *When?*

Traditionally, the canonization of the Pentateuch is associated with the »mission« of Ezra, who, according to the book of Ezr-Neh (hereafter: EN), presented the Torah of Moses to the inhabitants of Judah gathered in Jerusalem in the seventh year of Artaxerxes. Although the account is located in Neh 8, the majority of modern scholars consider it as an integral part of the Ezra traditions, originally placed between Ezr 8 and 9.¹ In what follows, we assume the independence of the Chr from EN, and concur with the view that, chronologically speaking, the earliest material from EN predates the Chronicler's work.² The historicity of Ezra as the

* Authors' note: We are indebted to a number of scholars who kindly commented on the manuscript of the present article, first and foremost, to Jacob Wright. Likewise, our sincere thanks go to Reinhard Achenbach, Israel Finkelstein, Thomas Römer, Eckart Otto, Benjamin Sass and Ran Zadok. Needless to say, the responsibility for the ideas expressed herein rests with us alone.

¹ In fact, already Jerome around 400 CE admits, of course without questioning the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch, that Ezra gave it its final form (Jerome, *Contra Helvidium*, ed. Vallars, II, 212). Although there is little doubt that Neh 8 was heavily edited throughout the Persian and Early Hellenistic periods, we tend to agree with Pakkala, according to whom the account in Neh 8,1–3.9–10.12a belongs, most probably, to the oldest stratum in Ezr 7–10 and Neh 8; J. Pakkala, *Ezra the Scribe: The Development of Ezra 7–10 and Nehemiah 8*, 2004, 177–179.301; contra to J. L. Wright, *Rebuilding Identity: The Nehemiah-Memoir and its Earliest Readers*, 2004, 319–340, according to whom Neh 8,1–12 belongs to the latest compositional layer of Nehemiah 1–13, which most probably should be dated to the Hellenistic period.

² E.g., H. G. M. Williamson, *Ezra and Nehemiah*, 1987, 55–69; S. Japhet, *The Relationship between Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah*, in: J. A. Emerton (ed.), *Congress Volume: Leuven 1989, 1991*, 298–313. As it is evident from a number of references in the Chr, which include the intentional modification of Chronicler's sources, by the time of Chr composition the Torah of Moses (most probably Pentateuch) was already canonized; Z. Talshir, *Several Canon-Related Concepts Originating in Chronicles*, *ZAW* 113 (2001), 386–403.

promulgator of the Law, however, has been doubted on some occasions.³ Be it as it may, Römer fittingly states that whether this tradition has any historical basis or not, »it is quite likely that the gathering of different law codes and narratives into one ›book‹ with five parts, the Pentateuch, goes back indeed to the time of Ezra's mission in Jerusalem«.⁴ Although attempts of creating a single literary unit of what later will be known as the Pentateuch may have begun already during the second half of the fifth century BCE (if not earlier), this activity should not be confused with the attempts of establishing the canonical version of the Torah, which corresponds to the time of Ezra's mission. But the question remains: When did this mission take place?

One of the most puzzling questions with regard to the missions of Ezra and Nehemiah concerns their chronology. Justifiably or not, Nehemiah's journey to Jerusalem in the twentieth year of Artaxerxes I (445 BCE) is considered by the vast majority of scholars as a reliable historical event. The arrival of Ezra, on the other hand, remains a subject of debate. Among the positions defended thus far, only two hypotheses seem to have survived as tenable options:

1) According to the traditional view, if both Ezra and Nehemiah were active under Artaxerxes I, then Ezra would have arrived at Jerusalem in 458 BCE, Nehemiah in 445 BCE.

2) The most common alternative to this view places Ezra's mission at the time of Artaxerxes II and his arrival in Jerusalem in the seventh year of this king, 398 BCE.

Although any certainty in these matters is probably unattainable,⁵ it seems that the majority of modern scholars favor the second hypothesis.

³ E.g., C. C. Torrey, *Ezra Studies*, 1910 [reprinted in: H. M. Orlinsky (ed.), *The Library of Biblical Studies*, 1970]; L. L. Grabbe, *Ezra-Nehemiah*, 1998, 152–153, *passim*; *idem*, *A History of the Jews and Judaism in the Second Temple Period*, 1. *Yehud: A History of the Persian Province in Judah*, 2004, 329–331.

⁴ T. Römer, *The So-Called Deuteronomistic History: A Sociological, Historical and Literary Interpretation*, 2005, 179.

⁵ The literature on this subject is limitless. Suffice is to mention that already in 1699, Gyles Strauch[ius] has summarized a variety of opinions concerning the chronology of the missions of Ezra and Nehemiah, advocating on the authority of Joseph Scaliger and his followers, the date during the reign of Artaxerxes II; G. Strauchius, *Breviarium chronologicum*, transl. R. Sault, 1704, 322; for summarizing major pros and cons concerning the contested theories, see e.g., Williamson, *Ezra and Nehemiah*, 37–46; J. Blenkinsopp, *Ezra-Nehemiah: A Commentary*, 1988, 139–144; J. M. Miller/J. H. Hayes, *A History of Ancient Israel and Judah*, 1986, 468–469; A. Lemaire, *La fin de la première période perse en Égypte et la chronologie judéenne vers 400 av. J.-C.*, *Transeuphratène* 9 (1995), 51–61; S. R. Burt, *The Contradictions of Genre in the Nehemiah Memorial*, PhD Dissertation, Duke University 2009, 176–199.

In what follows, we adopt the year 398 BCE as the most plausible date and offer some additional observations in favor of its reliability.

Current views on the formation of the Pentateuch tend to abandon the major premises of the Documentary Hypothesis.⁶ In its place, many opt for a model in which independent narrative units – the primeval history, the patriarchal stories and the Exodus traditions – stand on their own and were combined only at a very late stage, with Numbers being perhaps the latest book of the Torah.⁷ In any event, the canonization of the Torah – or better, the proto-canonization under the authority of Ezra and his circle – should not be considered as the final redaction of the Torah that miraculously survived to these days, but rather as an initial attempt of canonization, with certain modifications made after Ezra's time.⁸

⁶ E.g., R. Rendtorff, *The Problem of the Process of Transmission in the Pentateuch*, 1990; E. Blum, *Studien zur Komposition des Pentateuch*, 1990; R. G. Kratz, *Die Komposition der erzählenden Bücher des Alten Testaments: Grundwissen der Bibelkritik*, 2000; J. C. Gertz, *Tradition und Redaktion in der Exoduserzählung: Untersuchungen zur Endredaktion des Pentateuch*, 2000; E. Otto, *Das Deuteronomium im Pentateuch und Hexateuch: Studien zur Literaturgeschichte von Pentateuch und Hexateuch im Lichte des Deuteronomiumrahmens*, 2000; *idem*, *Die Tora: Studien zum Pentateuch. Gesammelte Aufsätze*, 2009; R. Achenbach, *Die Vollendung der Tora: Studien zur Redaktionsgeschichte des Numeribuches im Kontext von Hexateuch und Pentateuch*, 2003; K. Schmid, *Genesis and the Moses Story: Israel's Dual Origins in the Hebrew Bible*, 2010; R. Albertz, *The Recent Discussion on the Formation of the Pentateuch/Hexateuch*, *Beit Mikra* 55/2 (2010), 5–38 [Hebrew]; for recent collections of papers, see G. N. Knoppers/B. M. Levinson (eds.), *The Pentateuch as Torah: New Models for Understanding Its Promulgation and Acceptance*, 2007; T. B. Dozeman/K. Schmid/B. J. Schwartz (eds.), *The Pentateuch: International Perspectives on Current Research*, 2011.

⁷ Römer considers the Num as a »livre-pont,« bridging between Gen-Lev and Dtn, in order to create the Pentateuch (T. Römer, *De la périphérie au centre: les livres du Lévitique et des Nombres dans le débat actuel sur le Pentateuque*, in: T. Römer [ed.], *The Books of Leviticus and Numbers*, 2008, 3–34; and M. Noth, *Das vierte Buch Mose: Numeri*, 1966); for discussion concerning additional redactional revision in Num, so-called »theokratische Bearbeitung«, which probably took place in the first half of the fourth century BCE, see Achenbach, *Die Vollendung der Tora*.

⁸ E.g., E. Otto, *The Pentateuch in Synchronical and Diachronical Perspectives: Proto-rabbinic Scribal Erudition Mediating between Deuteronomy and the Priestly Code*, in: E. Otto/R. Achenbach (eds.), *Das Deuteronomium zwischen Pentateuch und Deuteronomistischem Geschichtswerk*, 2004, 31, n. 69; K. Schmid, *The Late Persian Formation of the Torah: Observations on Deuteronomy 34*, in: O. Lipschits/G. N. Knoppers/R. Albertz (eds.), *Judah and the Judeans in the Fourth Century B.C.E.*, 2007, 240, who clarifies the meaning of the proto-Pentateuchal redaction; R. Achenbach, *The Pentateuch, the Prophets, and the Torah in the Fifth and Fourth Centuries B.C.E.*, in: Lipschits *et al.* (eds.), *Fourth Century*, 253–285; according to Pakkala, *Ezra the Scribe*, 157, one should

For that reason, the present study focuses on the *beginning* of the process of canonization rather than its end. Notwithstanding, the move toward canonization, i.e. the initial attempt to assemble such a great number of various traditions into a single unit, requires an explanation. Why did it happen in (or shortly after) 398 BCE, in keeping with the Low Chronology? Could it have begun already in the fifth century BCE, as the traditional view assumes? As far as we can judge, a convincing explanation has yet to be set forth. With the aid of the archaeological and historical evidence, we offer here what we consider to be the most compelling explanation for the inception of Torah-canonization. In our reconstruction, this achievement should be viewed as a conscious response by Judahite Priestly circles to a new geopolitical reality that characterized the first half of the fourth century BCE, when Egypt was no longer a part of the Achaemenid Empire.

To be clear: the date 398 BCE serves only as a general point of reference, a plausible *terminus post quem*. One must not subscribe to the historicity of the Ezra traditions in order to embrace our view that the first half of the fourth century BCE represents the best possible option for the inception of canonization, given the geopolitical conditions described in the following pages.

1. Geopolitical Considerations

A decade ago, Ephraim Stern, in his comprehensive analysis of the Persian period, suggested that the provinces of both Yehud and Samaria underwent significant changes late in the Persian period.⁹ Along the coastal plain the renewal of the settlements and trade activity are attested already for the late sixth and especially the fifth century BCE,¹⁰ yet the mountainous inland regions witnessed a major transformation close to the end of the fifth but mainly throughout the fourth century BCE. This view was corroborated after the present authors studied and published

consider that some parts of the Pentateuch (e.g., Dtn 31,9–13) could be dependent on Neh 8 and not vice versa; for apparent Early Hellenistic insertions (e.g., Ex 4,6–7), which should be understood as a »counter history« that reacts against anti-Jewish Egyptian Hellenistic polemic describing Moses as a man affected with leprosy, see T. Römer, *Moses Outside the Torah and the Construction of a Diaspora Identity*, JHS 8 (2008), Article 15.

⁹ E. Stern, *Archaeology of the Land of the Bible, II: The Assyrian, Babylonian and Persian Periods, 732–332 B.C.E.*, 2001, 580–582.

¹⁰ Stern, *Archaeology of the Land of the Bible*, 580–582; O. Tal, *Some Remarks on the Coastal Plain of Palestine under Achaemenid Rule – An Archaeological Synopsis*, *Persika* 6 (2005), 82–87; Y. Shalev, *Tel Dor and the Urbanization of the Coastal Plain of Israel during the Persian Period*, *EI* 29 (2009), 363–371 (Hebrew).

the finds from Lachish Level I (in particular, the Attic pottery) of the renewed Israeli excavations, modifying the dates for this level in comparison to the former British excavations. It became clear that the foundation date of the substantial architectural remains of Level I, which include the gate and fortifications, the Residency and a few other service buildings, should be down-dated by about 50 years – that is to say from the mid-fifth century BCE, as it was previously accepted in the scholarly literature, to around 400 BCE.¹¹

In a subsequent study, we argued that the reorganization of the southern frontier of the Fifth Satrapy around 400 BCE, including the establishment of provinces' boundaries accompanied by monumental building activities in a series of southern Palestinian sites, should be seen as an imperial response to a new geopolitical reality in which Egypt was no longer a part of the Achaemenid Empire.¹² The most striking conse-

¹¹ A. Fantalkin/O. Tal, The Persian and Hellenistic Pottery of Level I, in: D. Ussishkin, *The Renewed Archaeological Excavations at Lachish (1973–1994)*, 2004, 2174–2194. There is no need to repeat here the whole set of arguments, except for a brief summary. In 1953, Tufnell dated the foundation of the Residency to ca. 450 BCE. This date was basically established following du Plat Taylor chronological evaluation of the Attic imports at the site and the mentioning of Lachish in Neh 11,30 (O. Tufnell, *Lachish III: The Iron Age*, 1953, 58–59). However, since the publication of *Lachish III*, significant progress has been achieved in the study of plain Attic ware, allowing one to reconsider the chronology of Lachish ceramic assemblage from the Persian period. More so, the re-evaluation of the historicity of Neh 11,30, allows one to disconnect the foundation date of the substantial architectural remains of Level I and the mentioning of »Lachish and its fields« in Neh 11,30 (O. Lipschits, *Literary and Ideological Aspects of Nehemiah 11*, *JBL* 121 [2002], 423–440); for a different approach that ascribes the account in Neh 11 to the Late Hellenistic period, implying that the addition in Neh 11,25–35 may reflect the actual borders of Judah after the Maccabean victories, see Wright, *Rebuilding Identity*, 307–309, both with earlier literature.

¹² It has been presented first during the conference »Judah and Judeans in the Achaemenid Period«, which took place at the University of Heidelberg in July 2003, and published later in A. Fantalkin/O. Tal, *Redating Lachish Level I: Identifying Achaemenid Imperial Policy at the Southern Frontier of the Fifth Satrapy*, in: O. Lipschits/M. Oeming (eds.), *Judah and the Judeans in the Persian Period*, 2006, 167–197. Since then, our view gained acceptance among a growing number of scholars; e.g., O. Lipschits/D. Vanderhoof, *Yehud Stamp Impressions in the Fourth Century B.C.E.: A Time of Administrative Consolidation?*, in: Lipschits *et al.* (eds.), *Fourth Century*, 75–94; J. Kessler, *Diaspora and Homeland in the Early Achaemenid Period: Community, Geography and Demography in Zechariah 1–8*, in: J. L. Berquist (ed.), *Approaching Yehud: New Approaches to the Study of the Persian Period*, 2007, 137–156; A. Berlejung, *Geschichte und Religionsgeschichte des antiken Israel*, in: J. C. Gertz (ed.), *Grundinformation Altes Testament*, 2010⁴ (rev.), 59–192, 159, n. 203; M. Hallaschka, *Haggai und Sacharja 1–8: Eine redaktionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung*, 2010, 125; C. Tuplin, *The Limits of Persianization. Some Reflections on Cultural Links in the Persian Empire*, in: E. S. Gruen (ed.), *Cultural*

quence of this reconstruction is that the Persian domination over southern Palestine became particularly prominent during the first half of the fourth century BCE.¹³ From an imperial point of view and on the basis of the archaeological record, it seems that during the fifth century BCE,

Identity in the Ancient Mediterranean, 2011, 150–182, 181, n. 118; D. Redford, Some Observations on the Traditions Surrounding »Israel and Egypt«, in: O. Lipschits/G. N. Knoppers/M. Oeming (eds.), *Judah and the Judeans in the Achaemenid Period*, 2011, 279–364, 319; R. Albertz, *The Controversy about Judean versus Israelite Identity and the Persian Government: A New Interpretation of the Bagoses Story* (*Jewish Antiquities XI*, 297–301), in: Lipschits *et al.* (eds.), *Achaemenid Period*, 483–504, 488; B. Becking, *More than a Pawn in Their Game: Zedekiah and the Fall of Jerusalem in 2 Chronicles 36:11–21*, in: J. Corley/H. van Grol (eds.), *Rewriting Biblical History: Essays on Chronicles and Ben Sira in Honour of Pancratius C. Beentjes*, 2011, 257–272, 266, n. 45.

- ¹³ This is in contrast to Nihan's recent suggestion, according to which »the end of the Persian period (from 400 BCE) shows a growing and rapid decline of the influence of the Achaemenid administration in the entire Levant after the loss of Egypt which, in the case of Yehud, appears to have significantly strengthened the control of the Jerusalem temple over the local administration, as the epigraphic record suggests (Lemaire 2007)« (C. L. Nihan, *The Emergence of the Pentateuch as ›Torah‹*, RC 4/6 [2010], 353–364, 358, with reference to A. Lemaire, *Administration in the Fourth-Century B.C.E. Judah in Light of Epigraphy and Numismatics*, in: Lipschits *et al.* [eds.], *Fourth Century*, 53–74); for a resembling approach, according to which the Persian imperial control of the vast empire was gradually disintegrating during the fourth century BCE, see also F. V. Greifenhagen, *Egypt on the Pentateuch's Ideological Map: Constructing Biblical Israel's Identity*, 2002, 232. Lemaire's interpretation of some recently discovered epigraphic and numismatic material from the fourth century BCE cited by Nihan, provides however even more support for our reconstruction (below) and certainly cannot be taken as evidence for the decline of Achaemenid influence in the Levant after the loss of Egypt. For a rejection of the notion of Achaemenid imperial decline in the fourth century BCE, see especially, J. Wiesehöfer, *The Achaemenid Empire in the Fourth Century B.C.E.: A Period of Decline?*, in: Lipschits *et al.* (eds.), *Fourth Century*, 11–30. As J. D. Ray, *Egypt: Dependence and Independence (425–343 B.C.)*, in: H. Sancisi-Weerdenburg (ed.), *Sources, Structures and Synthesis: Proceedings of the Groningen 1983 Achaemenid History Workshop*, 1987, 79–95, 84 clarifies, »the entire history of Egypt in the fourth century was dominated, and perhaps even determined, by the presence of Persia, a power which doubtless never recognized Egyptian independence, and which was always anxious to reverse the insult it had received from its rebellious provinces«. Taking into consideration a number of unsuccessful Persian attempts to re-conquer Egypt until the mission had been accomplished by Artaxerxes III in 343/342 BCE (or in 340/339 BCE if one accepts L. Depuydt's modified chronology, cf. *New Date for the Second Persian Conquest, End of Pharaonic and Manethonian Egypt: 340/39 B.C.E.*, JEH 3 [2010], 191–230; see also Redford, *Some Observations on the Traditions Surrounding »Israel and Egypt«*, in: Lipschits *et al.* [eds.], *Achaemenid Period*, 315–324). It is obvious that preparations for these invasions required tight imperial control in the newly created buffer-zone from where the campaigns were launched.

the rather undeveloped inland mountainous region of Palestine was considered strategically insignificant, hardly worthy of large-scale imperial investment or monitoring. This state of affairs is understandable as long as Egypt remained an integral part of the Achaemenid Empire. On the basis of the archaeological evidence, it seems that even the Inaros rebellion, which occurred around the middle of the fifth century BCE, was not significant enough to motivate a new policy regarding the political reorganization of the region of Palestine.¹⁴

¹⁴ According to Hoglund's influential reconstruction, the Inaros Rebellion was an extremely significant event from the point of view of the Persian authorities (due to the Delian League involvement), affecting immensely the modes of Achaemenid imperial control of Syria-Palestine (K. G. Hoglund, *Achaemenid Imperial Administration in Syria-Palestine and the Missions of Ezra and Nehemiah*, 1992, 137–205, *passim*). This theory was adopted in another extensive summary by C. E. Carter, *The Emergence of Yehud in the Persian Period: A Social and Demographic Study*, 1999, and gained acceptance by many scholars; e.g., D. L. Petersen, *Zechariah 9–14 and Malachi*, 1995, 19–20; M. G. Brett, *Reading the Bible in the Context of Methodological Pluralism: The Undermining of Ethnic Exclusivism in Genesis*, in: M. D. Carroll (ed.), *Rethinking Contexts, Rereading Texts: Contributions from the Social Sciences to Biblical Interpretation*, 2000, 48–74; Greifenhagen, *Egypt on the Pentateuch's Ideological Map*, 229–230; J. W. Belyon, *Egypt and Phoenicia in the Persian Period: Partners in Trade and Rebellion*, in: G. N. Knoppers/A. Hirsch (eds.), *Egypt, Israel, and the Ancient Mediterranean World: Studies in Honor of Donald B. Redford*, 2004, 455–477; K.-J. Min, *The Levitical Authorship of Ezra-Nehemiah*, 2004, 92–94, *passim*; J. Pakkala, *Ezra the Scribe*, 295. In all cases, the ca. 450 BCE date is seen as a clear-cut line in the history of Persian-period Palestine, accompanied by the establishing of a network of Persian fortresses of a distinctive type. The major premises of Hoglund's theory, however, were refuted by a number of scholars; e.g., D. Janzen, *Witch-Hunts, Purity and Social Boundaries: The Expulsion of the Foreign Women in Ezra 9–10*, 2002, 104.149–150; J. Sapin, *La «frontière» judéo-iduméenne au IV^e s. av. J.-C., Transeuphratène 27* (2004), 109–154; Fantalkin/Tal, *Redating Lachish Level I*, 187–188. Indeed, it has been generally conceived that Inaros Rebellion was just another event in a series of upheavals in the long period of Persian domination over Palestine and Egypt, with no trace of rebellion anywhere but in the Nile Delta; e.g., A. W. Gomme, *A Historical Commentary on Thucydides I*, 1959, 306; P. Briant, *From Cyrus to Alexander: A History of the Persian Empire*, 2002, 575–577.973; P. Green, *Diodorus Siculus Books 11–12.37.1: Greek History*, 480–431 BC – the Alternative Version, 2006, 141, n. 274. Recently, however, Kahn suggested that for some period Inaros, with the Athenians, have controlled Egypt almost entirely (D. Kahn, *Inaros' Rebellion against Artaxerxes I and the Athenian Disaster in Egypt*, *CQ 58* [2008], 424–440). His reconstruction, which uncritically accepts a number of Greek sources, basically based on the occurrence of the name of Inaros on the dated ostrakon (463/462 BCE) from Ein Manawir in the Kharga Oasis, where he is labeled as »Chief of the rebels« or as »Chief of the Bakalu tribe« of Lybian descent (M. Chauveau, *Inarôs, prince des rebelles*, in: F. Hoffmann/H.-J. Thissen [eds.], *Res Severa Verum Gaudium*, 2004, 39–46; J. K. Winnicki, *Der libysche Stamm der Bakaler im pharaonischen, persischen und ptolemäischen Ägypten*, *AncS 36* [2006], 135–142). As Rhodes pointed

In contrast, the events that followed the Egyptian rebellion of 404–400 BCE seem to be on a completely different scale. For the first time in more than a century of Persian rule, southern Palestine became the southwestern *frontier* of the Persian Empire.¹⁵ Frontiers of empires are usually ideal places to study how identities of dependent populations are born, shaped and reshaped.¹⁶ The southern frontier of the Fifth Satrapy was by definition an extremely sensitive area, not only bordering on recently rebellious Egypt, but also subject to increasing external influences from the West. With southern Palestine becoming the southwestern frontier of the Persian Empire, the region needed to be organized differently, especially in view of Achaemenid preparations for the re-conquest of Egypt. From an archaeological point of view, it appears that the Persian authorities expended significant energy organizing their newly created

out, however, »this does suggest that early in the revolt Inaros was gaining power (or at any rate somebody thought that he would gain power) in Upper Egypt as well as the delta, but it is equally consistent with a scenario in which by the time he brought in the Athenians Inaros controlled the delta but did not control Upper Egypt« (P. J. Rhodes, *Thucydidean Chronology*, *AAntHung* 49 [2009], 353–358, 357–358). In any event, even if the initial achievements of the Inaros Rebellion were indeed underestimated in the current scholarship, the fact remains that from the archaeological point of view the rebellion was not significant enough to motivate a new Achaemenid policy in its Fifth Satrapy. Here, some reference should be given to Edelman's thesis, according to which a master plan to incorporate Yehud into the Persian road, postal and military systems was instituted by Artaxerxes I (D. Edelman, *The Origins of the ›Second‹ Temple: Persian Imperial Policy and the Rebuilding of Jerusalem*, 2005). In our opinion, however, this theory that also postulates that the temple of Jerusalem was completed only in the days of Artaxerxes I, can neither be corroborated by her challenging textual analysis nor by the archaeological finds from the fifth century BCE in the area discussed.

¹⁵ Although Artaxerxes II was still recognized at Elephantine as late as January 401 BCE whilst recognition of Amyrtaeus there does not appear until his fifth regnal year (June 400 BCE), already around 401/400 BCE it has been obvious for all parties involved that Egypt was effectively lost for the Achaemenids (cf., e.g., P. Briant, *From Cyrus to Alexander*, 619.987, with earlier references). The general unrest throughout the Empire following the accession of Artaxerxes II, which made an immediate re-conquest of Egypt unlikely, and the fact that already after the battle of Cunaxa (early August 401 BCE), Greek mercenaries have considered offering their services to Artaxerxes II in order to campaign against Egypt (Xen. *Anab.* 2,1,14), point in the same direction.

¹⁶ E.g., T. D. Hall, *Puzzles in the Comparative Study of Frontiers: Problems, Some Solutions, and Methodological Implications*, *JWSR* 15 (2009), 25–47; M. Naum, *Re-emerging Frontiers: Postcolonial Theory and Historical Archaeology of the Borderlands*, *J Arch Meth Th* 17 (2010), 101–131. For comparative *longue durée* perspective, concerning the shifting fate (significance versus neglect) of the Middle Euphrates frontier between the Levant and the Orient, see M. Liverani, *The Middle Euphrates Valley in Pre-Classical Times as an Area of Complex Socio-Political Interactions*, *MedAnt* 10 (2007), 1–12.

buffer zone. It also seems clear that only in the fourth century should one look for established boundaries for the inland provinces of Yehud or Edom (Idumea). The close interaction between the imperial crown and the local Judahite administration points to a completely different level of Achaemenid involvement in local affairs that most probably included a fixed arrangement of district boundaries, garrisoning of the frontiers and, above all, tight Achaemenid control and investment, as is witnessed by the unprecedented construction works at many sites in southern Palestine. Likewise, the increase in the number of sites in the fourth century BCE reflects the demographic changes on the regional level.¹⁷

For the purpose of the present essay, we prefer to concentrate on the archaeological evidence from Judah (Yehud) and especially on the administrative centers located on the borders, with an emphasis on the southern part, bordering Edom, as the most sensitive region that may have been reorganized in view of a new geopolitical development.¹⁸

2. *Archaeological Evidence*

2.1. The new architectural landscape

In many of the large-scale excavations carried out in Judah, the strata pertaining to the Late Persian (and Early Hellenistic or Ptolemaic and Seleucid) periods are meager. Some reveal few architectural remains with unclear building plans or pits (silos, refuse, etc.), while others yield unstratified pottery. Sites such as Bethel, Tell en-Naşbeh (Biblical Mizpah), Gibeon, Tell el Ful (Biblical Gibeah of Saul), Nabi Samwil, Anathoth, Bethany and Jericho, and others are either located in the north part of the province of Yehud or in its center.¹⁹ In the case of Jerusalem, the Persian-period city shrunk back to its pre-eighth century BCE size and the Western Hill was empty until the second century BCE.²⁰ Even this small area of

¹⁷ O. Lipschits/O. Tal, The Settlement Archaeology of the Province of Judah: A Case Study, in: Lipschits *et al.* (eds.), Fourth Century, 33–52; A. Faust, Settlement Dynamics and Demographic Fluctuations in Judah from the Late Iron Age to the Hellenistic Period and the Archaeology of Persian-period Yehud, in: Y. Levin (ed.), Judah and its Neighbours in the Persian and Early Hellenistic Periods, 2007, 23–51.

¹⁸ For detailed discussion with regard to additional regions, see Fantalkin/Tal, Redating Lachish Level I, 181–186, Fig. 6. For the borders of Judah, see O. Lipschits, The Fall and Rise of Jerusalem: Judah under Babylonian Rule, 2005, 154–181.

¹⁹ Stern, Archaeology of the Land of the Bible, 428–443; Lipschits, The Fall and Rise of Jerusalem, 154–181; for the Early Hellenistic period sites, O. Tal, Archaeology of Hellenistic Palestine: Between Tradition and Renewal, 2009² (rev.), (Hebrew), 15–163 (and index).

²⁰ I. Finkelstein, Jerusalem in the Persian (and Early Hellenistic) Period and the Wall of Nehemiah, JSOT 32 (2008), 502–520; for the Hellenistic occupation, H. Geva, Jewish

the city appears to have been sparsely settled and mostly confined to the southern part of the City of David near the Pool of Siloam.

The most impressive building that can be dated with certainty to the Persian period on the southeast border of the province of Yehud was discovered at 'En Gedi on the western shore of the Dead Sea. The edifice (»Building 234«, ca. 23.5 × 22 m) is of an (irregular) open courtyard type with several rooms flanked around central courtyard/s and assigned to Stratum IV. According to the excavators, Building 234 was in use during the last three quarters of the fifth century BCE and was destroyed in ca. 400 BCE. Moreover, judging from the distribution of Attic ware within Building 234, the excavators conclude that the western part of the building was cleared of debris and reused as a dwelling by the surviving inhabitants of the site for half a century or more (the first half of the fourth century BCE) until this too was destroyed by nomadic (possibly Nabatean) raiders.²¹ The final publication of the building suggests a different interpretation, however. Acknowledging the difficulty in distinguishing typological developments in common and semi-fine wares of the fifth and fourth centuries BCE, the excavators rightfully deemed the Attic imports to be the best chronological anchor.²² Like other governmental Achaemenid sites, 'En Gedi yields fairly numerous Attic pottery-types that are mostly confined to the late fifth and early fourth centuries BCE.²³ These finds have been found in many of the rooms of the building, and the assumption of the excavators of a destruction ca. 400 BCE is not supported by the published final report.²⁴ In any case, the excavators are convinced that surviving inhabitants reused the building (or parts of it) until about the middle of the fourth century BCE. They base their conclusion on the

Quarter Excavations in the Old City of Jerusalem Conducted by Nahman Avigad, 1969–1982, II: The Finds from Areas A, W and X-2 – Final Report, 2003, 521–524.

- ²¹ B. Mazar/I. Dunayevsky, En-Gedi: Fourth and Fifth Seasons of Excavations, Preliminary Report, IEJ 17 (1967), esp. 134–140.
- ²² E. Stern, En-Gedi Excavations I, Conducted by B. Mazar/I. Dunayevsky, Final Report (1961–1965), 2007, 193–270, *passim*.
- ²³ Stern, En-Gedi Excavations I, 230–240, esp. Fig. 5.4.1; According to Stern, most of the Attic sherds found in the site and in particular in Building 234 belong to the second half and especially the end of the fifth century BCE, other belong in part to the second quarter of the fifth century BCE and in part to the first half or the middle of the fourth century BCE. The photographs presented in the final publication, as well as the lack of drawings and/or well-dated *comparanda* to the Attic pottery types retrieved, make these observations uncertain.
- ²⁴ Stern, En-Gedi Excavations I, 193–197. There is no indication whether the destruction of the floor relates to about 400 BCE, 350 BCE or possibly a later stage. Moreover, Fig. 5.1.2 on p. 196, which provides a detailed plan of Building 234 shows that the only alteration within Stratum IV occurred in the north (W218) and west (W219) walls of a small room (252), hence the destruction in about 400 BCE seems highly speculative.

finds allegedly retrieved on top of the »destruction« level, though no such level is apparent. This is not the place to discuss the foundation date of Building 234 or to criticize the dates given to the Attic pottery types. However, the dated finds seem to suggest that the building maintained its character throughout its existence until about the middle of the fourth century BCE. Moreover, Attic pottery types, which can securely be dated to the first half of the fourth century BCE, were found on the building's »late floors« as well as glass pendants in the shape of human heads; they point to the administrative nature of the building.²⁵

Another administrative site located on the far southern border of the province of Yehud is Beth Zur. According to Neh 3,16, the site formed the capital of half a district governed by Nehemiah ben Azbuk. Architectural remains from the Persian, and especially from the Hellenistic periods, are substantial and represent most of the excavated features at the site. Architectural remains on the tell originate from various periods. The walls were robbed and eroded to the extent that the total accumulation did not exceed one meter. In addition, the foundations of the buildings of the upper stratum, which were better preserved, had penetrated the earlier strata. For these reasons, the excavators were unable to attribute the architectural remains to a specific period and therefore published a general plan in which all the remains appear together. At the center of the tell is a fortress, and in some of its walls, we can discern three occupation phases. Solid walls (some 1.5 m thick) surrounded the fortress (41 × 33 m) in the east, south and west. Whether the first phase of the fortress should be assigned to the Persian period (and especially to the fourth century BCE) is disputed among scholars. The issue cannot yet be resolved due to the method of publication, which prevents one from seeing the stratigraphic relation among the occupational layers. However, dated Persian-period finds from the site, and especially of the fourth century BCE (e.g., Philistian and Judahite coins, seals and seal impressions) point to its administrative function at the time.²⁶

To this list of sites we may add the recently excavated site of Khirbet Qeiyafa, located on the west border of the province, in the western Judahite foothills.²⁷ So far, the site has attracted considerable attention mainly due to its Iron Age occupation, while the significance of its later, fourth-century BCE phase has been neglected. In our opinion, the Persian-period remains from Khirbet Qeiyafa should be viewed in the contexts of the new developments discussed above. As in the case of Lachish Level I, here too, the refurbishing of the Iron Age gate and fortifications, as well as the

²⁵ Stern, *En-Gedi Excavations I*, 228–240, *passim*.

²⁶ Stern, *En-Gedi Excavations I*, 228–240, *passim*. O. R. Saller *et al.*, *The 1957 Excavation at Beth-Zur*, 1968; Tal, *Archaeology of Hellenistic Palestine*, 150–152.

²⁷ Y. Garfinkel/S. Ganor, *Khirbet Qeiyafa, I: Excavation Report 2007–2008*, 2009.

construction of new buildings, should be assigned, on the basis of already published pottery and coins,²⁸ to the first decades of the fourth century BCE. Although the excavators assign most of the pottery to the Early Hellenistic period, we can date its appearance to the early fourth century BCE if we take into consideration the published prototypes and relevant *comparanda*. In this regard, the early silver coins from the site are of special significance, since they exhibit a meeting point of two Persian-period minting authorities (that of Philistia and that of Judah) not often documented in other Palestinian sites.²⁹

Given the scarcity of Persian-period remains in Jerusalem and their almost exclusive appearance in sections of the City of David,³⁰ we may reasonably assume that Jerusalem, as the capital of Yehud, was more confined to its temple community and religious functions, while the administration of the province was centered at nearby Ramat Raḥel.³¹

²⁸ Garfinkel/Ganor, Khirbet Qeiyafa, Chapter 12.

²⁹ Garfinkel/Ganor, Khirbet Qeiyafa, Chapter 13; see H. Gitler/O. Tal, *The Coinage of Philistia of the Fifth and Fourth Centuries BC: A Study on the Earliest Coins of Palestine*, 2006, 50–51. Indeed, the same meeting point of two Persian-period minting authorities is also apparent in yet another »border« site, Beth-Zur (above), where four Philistian coins are documented along with one Judahite coin (*ybzqyh bphh*), and all are dated to the fourth century BCE. The meeting of indigenous southern Palestinian minting authorities of the fourth century BCE seems to be characteristic of »border« administrative centers given their political status as »bridging« authorities. Thus it is no surprise that coins from the yet unpublished 2010 season at Khirbet Qeiyafa yielded a much larger variety of issues from the mints of Philistia and Judah (Y. Farhi, personal communication), which yet again support our predating of the »Early Hellenistic« occupation at the site to the early fourth century BCE. Not less important is the finding of another type of early silver (indigenous) coin that was recently suggested as belonging to the mint of fourth century BCE Edom based on its circulation, cf. H. Gitler/O. Tal / P. van Alfen, *Silver Dome-shaped Coins from Persian-period Southern Palestine*, *INR* 2 (2007), 47–62.

³⁰ Finkelstein, *Jerusalem in the Persian (and Early Hellenistic) Period*; Geva, *Jewish Quarter Excavations*.

³¹ J. P. Weinberg, *The Citizen-Temple Community*, 1992. It should be noted that contrary to Weinberg, the governor of the citizen-temple community in Jerusalem and the governor of the province of Yehud should not be considered the same; that is at no time the Jerusalemite citizen-temple community was identical with the whole province, neither demographically nor territorially. On the other hand, although many premises of Weinberg's theory were thoroughly and appropriately criticized, we tend to agree with Ska, according to whom many of critical voices »tend to undervalue the importance of one essential fact about postexilic Judah, namely, that the temple was the only important indigenous institution after the return from the exile, since the monarchy could not be restored« (J. L. Ska, »Persian Imperial Authorization«: Some Question Marks, in: J. W. Watts [ed.], *Persia and Torah: The Theory of Imperial Authorization of the Pentateuch*, 2001, 161–182, esp. 174–176, with extensive literature, quotation: *ibid.*, 176). That is to say, the postexilic community was rebuilt around the temple and not around the royal palace.

Naʿaman has argued that the site served as Assyrian and Persian administrative center and that imperial officials, with their staff and guard, lived there.³² Following his argument, we suggested in an earlier publication a modified date for the Persian-period remains. In our opinion the meager architectural remains discovered at Ramat Raḥel (Stratum IVb), which include the sections of a wall (1.2 m thick) in the eastern part of the excavated area following the course of an earlier Iron-Age citadel's outer wall, may well have formed part of a residency that was established by the Achaemenid representatives during the fourth century BCE and not before.³³ The renewed excavations at Ramat Raḥel lend support to our argument. According to the excavators, the site's Third Building Phase dates to the Persian period (late sixth-late fourth centuries BCE). To this phase they also assign the remains of a large building (about 20 × 30 m), rectangular in shape, built on the northwestern side of the palace complex from the Second Phase. It appears that the building was not planned as an independent structure but rather as a new wing of an existing complex, that is, as a northward expansion of the fortress tower that extends west of the line of the palace. The only stratigraphically-secured pottery assemblage related to this building phase, however, includes three jars and a jug on a floor level that can be dated to the fourth century BCE.³⁴

Beyond the establishment of the »new architectural landscape« at the southern frontier of the Fifth Satrapy in general and in the province of Yehud in particular,³⁵ two additional developments of the first half of the fourth century BCE deserve special attention:

³² N. Naʿaman, *An Assyrian Residence at Ramat Raḥel?*, TA 28 (2001), 260–280.

³³ Fantalkin/Tal, *Redating Lachish Level I*, 183.

³⁴ O. Lipschits *et al.*, *Palace and Village, Paradise and Oblivion: Unraveling the Riddles of Ramat Raḥel*, NEA 73/4 (2010), 2–49, esp. 36, Fig. 38a-b.

³⁵ It seems that Rehoboam's list of fortified cities, which appears only in II Chr 11,5–12, should be attributed to this time-period as well (see already R. Zadok, *On the Reliability of the Genealogical and Prosopographical Lists of the Israelites in the Old Testament*, TA 25 [1998], 228–254, 245). The issue remains controversial in the scholarly literature, with options of dating the list to the time of Rehoboam, Hezekiah or Josiah. Most recently, it has been even suggested by I. Finkelstein, *Rehoboam's Fortified Cities (II Chr 11,5–12): A Hasmonean Reality?*, ZAW 123 (2011), 92–107, that the list reflects a Hasmonean reality. We tend to believe, however, that the list should be connected to the reorganization of the region during the first half of the fourth century BCE; an additional archaeological/historical justification for this scenario will be presented elsewhere.

2.2. Judahite moneyed economy

It has been argued that the coinage of Judah served temple needs rather than the general economy.³⁶ The fact that most of these coins bear legends written in paleo-Hebrew script (and not in the common Aramaic script) lend support to such an assumption. If they were intended for temple payments (poll tax dues and the like), we can explain also their Hebrew legends, which in a way »cleansed« them from their conventional secular role and facilitated their use in the temple. Finally, the circulation of these coins (mostly in the region that is defined as the Persian-period province of Yehud),³⁷ small denominations (weighing some 0.5 [*grh*, 1/24 *šql*] or 0.25 [half-*grh*, 1/48 *šql*] gr),³⁸ and purity (ca. 97 % silver on average) favor such an explanation.³⁹ Until now around 20 Persian-period *yhd* coin-types have been documented. Jerusalem struck small silver coins under the Achaemenids bearing the abbreviated name of the province *yhd* (and less frequently in full *yhwd*) but sometimes bearing the legends of personal names and titles.⁴⁰ Stylistically, the coins can be identified as Athenian-styled issues (normally with the head of Athena on the obverse and with an owl and olive spray as well as the legend *yhd* or *yhwd* on the reverse), or Judahite-styled issues (bearing more varied divinities, humans, animals and floral motifs).⁴¹

³⁶ Y. Ronen, Some Observations on the Coinage of Yehud, *INJ* 15 (2003–2006), 29–30; O. Tal, Coin Denominations and Weight Standards in Fourth-Century BCE Palestine, *INR* 2 (2007), 24–25. Hence one should make the logical assumption that the coinage of Judah as *Temple* money would have served mainly a poll-tax; e.g., J. Liver, The Half-Shekel Offering in the Biblical and Post-Biblical Literature, *HTR* 56 (1963), 173–198; J. Schaper, Jerusalem Temple as an Instrument of the Achaemenid Fiscal Administration, *VT* 45 (1995), 528–539; the latter suggested that two separate taxation systems were operated at the Jerusalem Temple: the Persian one, organized at satrapy level, and the local one. Following Schaper's argument, the local indigenous coins served the latter, i.e. the local taxation system, due to the coins' provincial circulation and use.

³⁷ D. T. Ariel, The Coins from the Surveys and Excavations of Caves in the Northern Judean Desert, *Atiqot* 41/2 (2002), 287–288, Table 3.

³⁸ Ronen, Some Observations on the Coinage of Yehud, 29–30; Tal, Coin Denominations and Weight Standards, 19–20.

³⁹ For chemical analysis and silver purity cf. H. Gitler/C. Lorber, A New Chronology for the Ptolemaic Yehud Coinage, *AJN* Second Series 18 (2006), 19–25.

⁴⁰ I.e. *yhzqyb hpbh*, *yhzqyb*, cf. Y. Meshorer, A Treasury of Jewish Coins: From the Persian Period to Bar Kokhba, 2001, 14–16, Nos. 22.26; H. Gitler/C. Lorber, A New Chronology for the Yehizkiyah Coins of Judah, *SNR* 85 (2008), 61–82, esp. Table 1 for alternative view.

⁴¹ Meshorer, A Treasury of Jewish Coins, 6–19, *passim*.

Of special interest are the Judahite-styled issues that bear the dissemination of the head of the Achaemenid king.⁴² How should such coins, which are the most common *yhd* type known at present, be understood in relation to the use of money in the temple economy? We suggest that Achaemenid motifs – which originated in the Persian heartland and were mimicked in the Phoenician, southern Palestinian and especially Jerusalemite (*yhd*) monetary series – may be viewed as expressions of Persian ideologies and imperial power. According to this approach, the Achaemenids may have manipulated royal artistic imagery as a form of communication in order to support or advance official ideology. Even if the motif of the Achaemenid king on the *yhd* coins merely typifies imperial iconography, the social impact of such a motif suggests a high degree of loyalty among the Judahite subjects. Although it is very unlikely that these coins inspired worship of the Achaemenid king, they did affirm Persian sovereignty over the province of Yehud in the face of the Egyptian threat. It is no coincidence that in Judah during the fourth century BCE, a poll tax was apparently levied from »third of a *šql*« in the time of Nehemiah to »half a *šql* by the sacred standard (*šql hqdš*)« or »*bq*^c« in the Pentateuch. The latter may quite possibly be traced to the time of Ezra. If so, it should be viewed against the backdrop of what seems to have been increased Achaemenid involvement in the region, which required a much higher degree of monetary investment in building operations, conscription and garrisoning.⁴³

Here one must emphasize once again that the advanced coin-based economy – or more specifically, the »small change« in the provinces of southern Palestine (Philistia, Samaria, Yehud and Edom) – is evident mainly from the fourth century BCE. Prior to this stage, larger denominations were minted (mostly in Philistia). Likewise, it should be noted that southern Palestinian coins of the Persian period were not minted on a regular basis. They were probably issued on official occasions and only as needed; e.g., for taxes, transactions, or to celebrate the independence of a city/province (or new rights granted to it). Judahite coinage, like other early coinages (in southern Palestine and elsewhere), seems to have been used for a limited range of purposes and by a limited number of people. This is supported by the total number of Persian (and Early Hellenistic) Judahite coins known to us, and by the scarcity of Judahite coins retrieved from controlled archaeological excavations.⁴⁴ The minting of

⁴² H. Gitler, Identities of the Indigenous Coinages of Palestine under Achaemenid Rule. The Dissemination of the Image of the Great King, in: P. P. Iossif *et al.* (eds.), *More than Men, Less than Gods: Studies on Royal Cult and Imperial Worship*, 2011, 105–119.

⁴³ A. Lemaire, Taxes et impôts dans le Sud de la Palestine (IV^e siècle avant J.-C.), *Transeuphratène* 28 (2004), 133–142; Liver, *The Half-Shekel Offering*. In this regard, Achaemenid preparations for the re-conquest of Egypt should be taken into consideration as well.

⁴⁴ Ariel, *The Coins from the Surveys and Excavations*, 287–288, Table 3.

coins of small denominations in Judah (the *grh* and half-*grh*), in the fourth century BCE, apparently occurred during the »second minting stage« of the southern Palestinian coins, which many scholars have assumed to be the first stage. This is to say that according to the hoard evidence, Palestinian coin-based economies began in Philistia with *šqln* (»tetradrachms«) and *rb^cn* (»drachms«), whereas smaller denominations were introduced only after the local and neighboring authorities (Samaria, Judah and Edom) acknowledged the economic benefits of the minting of local coinage on a wider scale. Smaller denominations (in the case of Judah, the *grh*, half-*grh* and smaller fractions) not only enabled a wider range of flexibility in daily economic life and especially in cultic transactions, but also facilitated wealth accumulation.

2.3. The *yhd/yh* jars with stamped seal impressions

Circulation of storage jars with *yhd/yh* Aramaic stamped seal impressions on their handles serves as additional evidence for the borders of the province of Yehud, since these impressions are discovered, with few exceptions, at clearly defined Judahite sites.⁴⁵ Given the fact that Early/Late Persian as well as the Late Persian/Early Hellenistic contexts are not often defined stratigraphically in Judah, attempts to differentiate between early and late types of stamped seal impressions were normally based on paleography of the script. Recently Vanderhooft and Lipschits proposed a new chronological framework for studying the stamped seal impressions of Judah. They distinguish »Early« (late sixth-fifth centuries BCE), »Middle« (fourth-third centuries BCE) and »Late« (second century BCE) groups, whose dates are also based primarily on paleographic evidence. Quantification of these stamped seal impressions show predominance (some 54 %) for the »Middle Types«.⁴⁶ Given the hundreds of standardized stamped seal impressions and their sites of circulation, it is logical to assume that fourth century BCE Judah underwent an administrative reorganization, oriented towards the Achaemenid empire, on the one hand, and its internal cultic needs (i.e. its temple), on the other.⁴⁷ Although the

⁴⁵ E. Stern, *Material Culture of the Land of the Bible in the Persian Period 538–332 B.C.*, 1982, 202–213; *idem*, *Archaeology of the Land of the Bible*, 545–551.

⁴⁶ Lipschits/Vanderhooft, *Yehud Stamp Impressions in the Fourth Century B.C.E.*, esp. 80–84 [»Middle Types«]; *idem*, *A New Typology of the Yehud Stamp Impressions*, *TA* 34 (2007), 12–37, 25–29 [»The Middle Group: Types 13–15«]; *idem*, *The Yehud Stamp Impressions: A Corpus of Inscribed Impressions from the Persian and Hellenistic Periods in Judah*, 2011, which basically repeats the conclusions of the previous publications.

⁴⁷ Fantalkin/Tal, *Redating Lachish Level I*, 180–181.

function of the storage jars with stamped handles is debated,⁴⁸ the sites that have yielded the majority of stamped seal impressions (Jerusalem and Ramat Raḥel) were likely cultic and administrative centers (accordingly) that served as centers of production and especially distribution. The stamps may have served as marks for official (provincial), local, priestly or more likely priestly-authorized consumption, as well as for quality, purity and fixed volume of standards for liquids (wine and/or oil) and possibly grains (wheat and barely). Yet their widespread appearance in comparison to the preceding period (late sixth-fifth centuries BCE), should be understood against the re-organization of imperial policy on the newly established frontier.⁴⁹

(To be continued)

The canonization of the Pentateuch has preoccupied scholars from different disciplines from antiquity to the present. However, two major questions still require an explanation: when did it happen and why did it happen? In this two-part article an attempt has been made to clarify these issues. Based on an interdisciplinary approach, where the insights of redaction criticism are merged with archaeologically-supported historical analysis, we suggest that the inception of the Torah-canonization should be viewed within the framework of the geopolitical transformation that characterized the first half of the fourth century BCE, when, following a major Egyptian rebellion, Egypt was no longer a part of the Persian Empire, while southern Palestine became the empire's frontier for the first time in more than a century of Achaemenid rule. The canonization of the essentially anti-Egyptian version of the Torah in the early fourth century BCE should be considered as a conscious response of Jerusalem's priestly circles to this new reality, signaling to the imperial authorities that they are dealing with loyal subjects that consider Egypt as a world of chaos, an antithesis to the world of cosmic order, so central to Persian imperial self-understanding.

La canonisation du Pentateuque a préoccupé les chercheurs depuis l'antiquité jusqu'à nos jours. Deux questions demeurent cependant: quand et pourquoi s'est-elle produite? Cette étude en deux parties tente de répondre à ces questions. A partir d'une approche interdisciplinaire, qui combine les résultats de la critique rédactionnelle avec une analyse historique fondée sur les données archéologiques, la solution suivante est proposée: le début de la ca-

⁴⁸ Cf. Stern, *En-Gedi Excavations I*, 205–206; D. T. Ariel/Y. Shoham, *Locally Stamped Handles and Associated Body Fragments of the Persian and Hellenistic Periods*, in: D. T. Ariel (ed.), *Excavations at the City of David, 1978–1985, VI: Inscriptions, 2000*, 138–139.

⁴⁹ It remains to be seen if the exceptional phenomenon of stamped seal impressions in Judah – that is the *longue durée* attested for the practice of stamping handles of locally-made storage jars prior to firing, with various motifs of official meanings, from the late eighth through the mid-first centuries BC, is directly connected to the economic activities of the *Temple* and its priests (closely supervised by the royal administration at the time of monarchy). Linking this practice with cultic needs and method of income, that is the priestly verification of the purity of goods whether used in the *Temple* or by the members of the Jewish community in Judah, seems to be the most logical assumption.

nonisation de la Torah se situe dans le cadre des changements géopolitiques qui marquent la première moitié du 4^{ème} siècle av. J.-C. A la suite d'un vaste soulèvement, l'Égypte ne faisait plus partie de l'empire perse, alors que la Palestine du sud formait, pour la première fois depuis plus d'un siècle de domination achéménide, la frontière méridionale de l'empire. La canonisation de la version essentiellement anti-égyptienne de la Torah du début du 4^{ème} siècle doit être comprise comme une réponse consciente des prêtres de Jérusalem à cette nouvelle situation politique. Ils indiquent ainsi à l'administration perse qu'ils sont des sujets loyaux qui considèrent l'Égypte comme une puissance du chaos, à l'inverse de l'ordre cosmique qui caractérise l'auto-compréhension de l'empire perse.

Die Kanonisierung des Pentateuch hat Gelehrte verschiedener Disziplinen von der Antike bis in die Gegenwart beschäftigt. Dennoch harren zwei wichtige Fragen noch immer der Erklärung: Wann hat sie sich ereignet, und warum? In diesem zweiteiligen Artikel wird der Versuch unternommen, diese Fragen zu klären. Basierend auf einem interdisziplinären Ansatz, der die Erkenntnisse der Redaktionskritik mit einer archäologisch fundierten historischen Analyse verbindet, schlagen die Autoren vor, dass der Beginn der Kanonisierung der Tora im Zusammenhang der geopolitischen Veränderungen zu sehen ist, welche die erste Hälfte des 4. Jh. v. Chr. prägten. Ägypten war in Folge eines größeren Aufstandes nicht mehr Teil des persischen Großreiches, während der Süden Palästinas erstmals nach mehr als einem Jahrhundert achämenidischer Herrschaft die Reichsgrenze bildete. Die Kanonisierung der wesentlich anti-ägyptischen Version der Tora im frühen 4. Jh. v. Chr. kann als eine bewusste Antwort der Jerusalemer Priester auf diese neue politische Situation verstanden werden. Diese signalisieren der persischen Verwaltung, dass sie loyale Untertanen sind, die Ägypten als eine Chaosmacht betrachten, als Gegenbild der kosmischen Ordnung, die für das Selbstverständnis des persischen Reiches zentral ist.

The Canonization of the Pentateuch: When and Why? (Continued, Part II)*

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II. *Why?*

It is within the framework outlined above that we can better understand the canonization of the Pentateuch. If one subscribes to the Low Chronology for the mission of Ezra, as we do, it is difficult to escape the conclusion that the initial attempt of canonization or »proto-canonization« (from ca. 398 BCE on) was related to a new geopolitical reality following the Persian withdrawal from Egypt. However, even without accepting the historicity of the Ezra traditions, it seems that the geopolitical conditions of the first half of the fourth century BCE represent the most reasonable framework for the canonization of the Pentateuch.

Some may question the possibility of determining the specific historical circumstances that triggered the canonization of such a complicated literary and theological work as the Torah. Admittedly, the creation of the units that composed the Pentateuch and their compilation/redaction into a unified whole represents a lengthy and complex process. However, what concerns us here is the initial impetus for canonization. We do not deny that certain redactions and modifications to the Pentateuch were made subsequently.¹ Yet as Goody pointed out, canonization constitutes a deliberate process of selection, where certain traditions were purposely included while others were consciously excluded.² That is to

* Part I of this contribution was published in ZAW 124/1 (2012), on pages 1–18.

¹ E.g., Otto, *The Pentateuch in Synchronical and Diachronical Perspectives* (for complete bibliography henceforth, see part I of this article), 31, n. 69; K. Schmid, *The Late Persian Formation of the Torah*, 240, who clarifies the meaning of the proto-Pentateuchal redaction; R. Achenbach, *The Pentateuch, the Prophets, and the Torah*, 253–285; according to Pakkala, one should consider that some parts of the Pentateuch (e.g., Dtn 31,9–13) could be dependent on Neh 8 and not vice versa, J. Pakkala, *Ezra the Scribe*, 157; for apparent early Hellenistic insertions (e.g., Ex 4,6–7), which should be understood as a »counter history« that reacts against anti-Jewish Egyptian Hellenistic polemic describing Moses as a man affected with leprosy, see T. Römer, *Moses Outside the Torah*, Article 15.

² J. Goody, *Canonization in Oral and Literate Cultures*, in: A. van der Kooij/K. van der Toorn (eds.), *Canonization and Decanonization*, 1998, 3–16.

say, we are justified in our effort to investigate the connection between contemporary geopolitical dynamics and the proto-canonization of the Pentateuch. As we argue, the rebellion of the Egyptian province provoked the establishment of a new buffer zone, accompanied by Achaemenid imperial investment and monitoring. This was without a doubt a watershed moment in the history of the postexilic community of Yehud. It required significant ideological rethinking, and it resulted, we suggest, in the initial attempt of compiling, redacting and canonizing the constituent literary blocks of what would become the Torah.³

In placing the proto-canonization of the Torah into the broad geopolitical conditions of a newly created southern frontier of the Fifth Satrapy, we are not subscribing to the theories of Persian »imperial authorization« of the Torah, as advocated by Frei and others.⁴ As demonstrated by many scholars, the idea of *Reichsautorisation*, according to which the canonized Pentateuch functioned as an instrument of imperial control, is difficult to maintain.⁵ We tend to believe, however, that rather than being the product of an imposed imperial authorization, the canonization of the Torah should be considered as a conscious response by Judahite

³ For a cross-cultural perspective, including the notion that specific incidents and geopolitical circumstances may be considered as social catalysts for beginning the process of canonization, see, e.g., T. Stordalen, *The Canonization of Ancient Hebrew and Confucian Literature*, JSOT 32 (2007), 3–22.

⁴ P. Frei, *Reichsidee und Reichsorganisation im Perserreich*, Zweite, bearbeitete und stark erweiterte Auflage, 1996.

⁵ As has amply been demonstrated by many contributions in J. W. Watts (ed.), *Persia and Torah*. During the last years there was no shortage of possible scenarios regarding the notion that canonization and promulgation of the Pentateuch relates in some way to the Persian imperial goals. For instance, according to Berquist's analysis, although due to its inconstancies Judahite canon should not be considered a truly imperial artifact, the imperial canonization was imposed on colonized Judah during the reign of Darius I, with the goal to function as an expression of imperial power (J. L. Berquist, *Postcolonialism and Imperial Motives for Canonization*, Semeia 75 [1996], 15–35). This view, however, suffers from inner contradictions and finds little echo in the archaeological/historical reality of the early fifth century BCE. Zlotnick-Sivan on the other hand, has suggested that the redaction of the Ex 1f. should be set between 530–525 BCE, mirroring Persian anti-Egyptian propaganda. In her reconstruction, by creating the story of the Exodus out of Egyptian bondage, Judahite elites provided ideological justification for Egyptian conquest by the Persian empire (H. Zlotnick-Sivan, *Moses the Persian? Exodus 2, the »Other« and Biblical »Mnemohistory«*, ZAW 116 [2004], 189–205). We find this reconstruction quite implausible, and not only because of such a narrow chronological limits for the redaction of the Ex 1f. It is simply hard to believe that the Persian authorities would need any ideological justification for their westward expansion from Judahite subjects (ones among many others), not to mention the improbability of such a complicated hidden message (written in Hebrew) being correctly understood and deciphered on the Persian side.

Priestly circles (most probably under the guidance of Ezra) to a new geopolitical reality.

Canonizing such a vast variety of traditions within a single literary unit, whose basic premises were shared by the Priestly school and the Deuteronomists, both in the Land and in the Diaspora, had a high potential of crystallizing a collective Jewish identity – a great desideratum for the survival of the postexilic community.⁶ The renegotiation of a new corporate identity *vis-à-vis* both the Persian authorities and local non-Judahite populations, underscored the right, from time immemorial, of a ›divinely chosen people‹ to possess a territory. From the point of view of the ruling Persian administration, the possibility to monitor this people via a written law would have been appealing – and not necessarily only for the reason of economic exploitation or logistical assistance to Persian armies. In the context of intercultural translatability of deities, where »people in one culture, most commonly at a highly elite level, explicitly recognize that the deities of other cultures are as real as its own«,⁷ it would have been an advantage to have on your side a people whose God (at least according to their own claims) defeated the gods of Egypt.

But there is much more at stake here. As Bruns suggested, »the whole point of canonization is to underwrite the authority of a text, not merely with respect to its origin as against competitors in the field – this, technically, would simply be a question of authenticity – but with respect to the present and future in which it will reign or govern as a binding text«.⁸ The very purpose of canonization, in Bruns' opinion, is to distinguish between texts that are powerful in a given situation and those that

⁶ Cf. Ska, Persian Imperial Authorization, 161–182. Bringing »all the people« under the binding authority of the Torah, should be definitely emphasized (cf. G.N. Knoppers, Beyond Jerusalem and Judah: The Mission of Ezra in the Province of Transeuphrates, EI 29 [2009], 78*–87*). In this respect, the role of Moses in the construction of Diaspora identity is of paramount importance. Römer points out that the tradition about Moses' Ethiopian wife, with its aim to legitimate intermarriages, most probably originated in a Diaspora context (Römer, Moses Outside the Torah). If so, Ezra's prohibitions of intermarriages should be seen as a Midrashic interpretation of Diaspora-oriented tradition, addressed specifically to the local community of followers. In other words, for the sake of the preservation of Yehud indigenous community and the power of its elites, authorized by the existence of the temple at Jerusalem, what is allowed hesitantly abroad is not tolerated on a local level. In this regard, if the account presented in Neh 8 indeed originally bridged Ez 8 and 9, it would come as a little surprise that the Midrashic interpretation that forbids intermarriages on the local level follows the presentation of the pan-Judahite oriented Torah of Moses to the people of Jerusalem.

⁷ M.S. Smith, God in Translation: Deities in Cross-cultural Discourse in the Biblical World, 2008, 6.

⁸ G.R. Bruns, Canon and Power in the Hebrew Scriptures, CrInq 10/3 (1984), 462–480, esp. 464.

are not. In other words, it is always an issue of authority and power. What authority and power could be gained by the postexilic community and its leaders by canonizing the Pentateuch? On the other hand, how would the canonization have benefited the Persian crown?

The complexity and inner contradictions of the Pentateuch, which continue to preoccupy the current generation of biblical scholars, became an invaluable asset for the postexilic Judahite community. The Persian authorities could not possibly comprehend the intricacies of Judahite laws and foundation myths, not even if they had been written in Aramaic. In imperial eyes, what might have been most important is the central message(s) carried by the proclaimed canonical version of the Pentateuch. That is to say, redacting and canonizing blocks of traditions in the form of the Pentateuch guaranteed a connection to the past and empowered interpreters.⁹ The latter consisted to a great extent of Priestly circles who responded to new geopolitical realities. As long as the interpreters were responsible for transmitting the meaning of the text (manipulations are not excluded), they were capable of communicating different messages to different audiences (i.e. to the local Judahite population and its neighbors, to the Diaspora or to the Persian authorities). The most powerful message of the Pentateuch identifies the Exodus from Egypt and the giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai as a charter myth of the nation of Israel. The Torah was transmitted by Moses, who is described as a prophet in a category by himself, with no successor like him.

By canonizing selected parts from the available materials, Judahite scribes (and leaders) who originated at the center of the Persian Empire reveal a deep understanding of Persian imperial ideology and rhetoric. As already stated in Part I of this article, the current opinions on the genesis of the Pentateuch tend to operate on the assumption of the existence of separate complex blocks of material, where smaller units (e.g., the primeval history, the patriarchal stories, the Exodus traditions, etc.) gradually crystallized into larger literary units before they were modified and compiled by Deuteronomistic and Priestly redactors.¹⁰ If there is any validity to the Hexateuch thesis, Otto's analysis, according to which the scribal redactors formed the Hexateuch in the fifth century BCE (in the

⁹ Cf. J.Z. Smith, *Sacred Persistence: Toward a Redescription of Canon*, in: J.Z. Smith (ed.), *Imagining Religion: From Babylon to Jonestown*, 1982, 36–52.

¹⁰ According to Russell's analysis of the traditions about Egypt and the Exodus in the Hebrew Bible, initially there were at least three different regional traditions concerning the episode (S. C. Russell, *Images of Egypt in Early Biblical Literature: Cisjordan-Israelite, Transjordan-Israelite, and Judahite Portrayals*, 2009; see also, K. van der Toorn, *The Exodus as Charter Myth*, in: J. W. van Henten/A. Houtepen (eds.), *Religious Identity and the Invention of Tradition*, 2001, 113–127; see, however, C. Berner, *Die Exoduserzählung: das literarische Werden einer Ursprungslegende Israels*, 2010).

period of Nehemiah's activity in Jerusalem),¹¹ makes a lot of sense in the context of our reconstruction. As we pointed out elsewhere,¹² the settlement patterns attested in the region of Judah during the fifth century BCE, suggest that the Persian authorities deliberately permitted a certain degree of independence with regard to the resettlement of the area: First they allowed the newly established rural communities to organize, and thereafter included them within a rigid taxation system. The organization and spatial distribution of these communities may be explained therefore as an internal creation («self-organization process»), without strict imperial monitoring during the fifth century BCE. The aspirations for territorial expansion, reflected in the Book of Joshua, fit the absence of tight imperial control in the hill country of Judah during this period and strengthen the notion that the Hexateuch redaction was central to Nehemiah's circle.¹³ One may assume that what triggered the concerns of Judah's neighbors, as expressed in Neh 2,10–20, was less the act of repairing the city-wall of Jerusalem than the expansionist agenda of the Hexateuch redactors.¹⁴ In the same vein, Otto's hypothesizing of an ad-

¹¹ Otto, *Das Deuteronomium im Pentateuch und Hexateuch*; *idem*, *The Pentateuch in Synchronical and Diachronical Perspectives*; *idem*, *Die Tora*; Achenbach, *Die Vollendung der Tora*; E. A. Knauf, *Towards an Archaeology of Hexateuch*, in: J. C. Gertz, *et al.* (eds.), *Abschied vom Jahwisten. Die Komposition des Hexateuch in der jüngsten Diskussion*, 2002, 275–294; T. Römer/M. Z. Brettler, *Deuteronomy 34 and the Case for a Persian Hexateuch*, *JBL* 119 (2000), 401–419. Although in Van Seters' opinion: «the Hexateuch is a scholarly fantasy and all the redactors invented to support it are likewise mere fantasies of scholarly ingenuity.» (cf. J. Van Seters, *Deuteronomy between Pentateuch and the Deuteronomistic History*, *HTS* 59 [2003], 955); we find it difficult to accept this approach, which is based on the invention of the so-called «Yahwist historian» that is later than the Deuteronomist, and rejects the notion of Pentateuchal or any other redactor (e.g., J. Van Seters, *Prologue to History: The Yahwist as Historian in Genesis*, 1992; *idem*, *The Pentateuch: A Social-Science Commentary*, 1999).

¹² Fantalkin/Tal, *Redating Lachish Level I*, 188–189.

¹³ We disagree with the theories, according to which the conquest stories narrated in the book of Jos were *invented* in the Persian period, as a sort of «a utopian manifesto, intended to support a project of return that never took place in such terms.» (cf. M. Liverani, *Israel's History and the History of Israel*, 2005, 272). These stories, utopian as they are, have a much earlier pedigree in the context of biblical historiography (see N. Na'aman, *The Past that Shapes the Present: The Creation of Biblical Historiography in the Late First Temple Period and after the Downfall*, 2002 [Hebrew]).

¹⁴ From an archaeological perspective, we have no conclusive evidence of a city-wall dated to the Persian period, although the area of the city in Persian times was intensively excavated (cf. Finkelstein, *Jerusalem in the Persian (and Early Hellenistic) Period*, 502–520). Presenting the act of repairing the city-wall of Jerusalem as the main trigger for a joint opposition to Nehemiah's activity (Neh 2,10–20) may be a later reinterpretation of events, belonging most probably to the Hasmonean period (and cf. Wright, *Rebuilding Identity*, 67–127, *passim*). It should be noted that according to Nihan, the sep-

ditional Priestly redaction of the Pentateuch around 400 BCE, which included *Fortschreibung* and *Ergänzungen* and the omission of the Book of Joshua,¹⁵ provides an additional corroboration for our archaeologically-historically oriented scenario. Indeed, in the period of consolidated imperial rule in the Fifth Satrapy, following the Persian withdrawal from Egypt, the story of military conquest by the Israelites would have met with disapprobation on the side of the imperial authorities. Hence, the Exodus became the central national myth.

As demonstrated by Cohn and others, Israel's journey from Egypt mirrors, on the whole, Van Gennep's famous tripartite structure of the rites of passage.¹⁶ The separation stage (*rites de séparation*) is marked by a final break at the crossing of the Red Sea; the liminal stage (*rites de marge* or *limen*) concerns the period of wandering in the wilderness; and the last, reincorporation stage (*rites d'agrégation*), occurs at the crossing of the Jordan and the conquest. This scheme fits the Hexateuch's narrative perfectly. However, in the context of what eventually became canonical Pentateuchal tradition, the reincorporation stage appears as a vague concept, since the conquest and the settlement narrative is missing. Nevertheless, one of the most important aims of reincorporation (i.e., Israel's disengagement from Egypt and what it symbolizes) remains manifestly visible already during the separation stage. In the final act of separation, Yahweh splits the chaotic sea into two. When the Israelites advance toward the world of heavenly inspired order (Promised Land), they leave the world of chaos (Egypt) behind.¹⁷ It seems that an ancient Canaanite/Israelite tradition suddenly evolved into a forceful and rel-

aration of the Pentateuch from the Former Prophets accounts for the fact that the Torah of Moses was intended to be accepted by both Judahites and Samaritans (C. L. Nihan, *The Torah between Samaria and Judah: Schechem and Gerizim in Deuteronomy and Joshua*, in: Knoppers/Levinson (eds.), *The Pentateuch as Torah*, 187–223). In this regard, Knoppers' nuanced analysis of major contacts between Yehud and Samaria is particularly revealing (G. N. Knoppers, *Revisiting the Samaritan Question in the Persian Period*, in: Lipschits/Oeming (eds.), *Judah and the Judeans in the Persian Period*, 265–289).

¹⁵ Otto, *Das Deuteronomium im Pentateuch und Hexateuch*; *idem*, *The Pentateuch in Synchronical and Diachronical Perspectives*; *idem*, *Die Tora: Studien zum Pentateuch*; Achenbach, *Die Vollendung der Tora*; note that Achenbach's dates for HexRed and PentRed are slightly different.

¹⁶ R. Cohn, *The Shape of Sacred Space: Four Biblical Studies*, 1981, 7–23; for basic studies on this topic, see e.g., A. Van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*, 1960; V. Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure*, 1969; *idem*, *Dramas, Fields, and Metaphors: Symbolic Action in Human Society*, 1974.

¹⁷ The parallels between this act and Marduk splitting the watery Tiamat into two, in order to produce order out of chaos, are striking (e.g., T. B. Dozeman, *Exodus*, 2009, 298–300; M. S. Smith/W. T. Pitard, *The Ugaritic Baal Cycle*, vol. II, 2009, 255–257).

evant metaphor, extremely useful from the point of view of the postexilic community of Yehud.¹⁸

Following the Egyptian ›reckless‹ disengagement from Achaemenid control, the canonization of such a tradition signaled to imperial authorities that the Judahites viewed Egypt as a world of chaos, an antithesis to the world of cosmic order so central to Persian imperial self-understanding. The Persian Empire, as the successor of the neo-Assyrian and neo-Babylonian empires, possessed and promoted the same imperial ideology and system of values, with its aspiration to rule the entire universe.¹⁹ The basic element of this ideology is the notion that a correct relationship between divine and human levels can be obtained only under a firm authority of one kingdom, whose ruler is authorized by the gods. The cosmic order can be sustained only within the confines of a divinely chosen empire. The image projected by the empire was intended to assure the loyalty of its subjects: They should be grateful for being included within the limits of the *oikumene*. Those who live beyond the borders of the divine order live in chaos, and it is the duty of the empire to bring them into submission by expanding the realm of order. Subjugated peoples did not always realize the benefits of submitting to the yoke of the empire. Therefore, their resistance had to be eliminated – through both force and ideological propaganda.

Operating within the same tradition of imperial ideology and rhetoric, the Persian Empire developed the notion of imperial order that maintains the ultimate ›order/truth‹ (*arta*) in opposition to those who fall into the trap of ›lie/falsehood‹ (*drauga*). According to the inscription on Darius' I tomb, Ahura-Mazda conferred kingship on him because the earth ›was in commotion (*yaudati*).‹ Like other rulers, Darius was divinely chosen to be the deity's instrument in quelling the chaos that rav-

¹⁸ Cf., e.g., F.M. Cross, *Canaanite Myth and the Hebrew Epic*, 1973; C. Kloos, *Yhwh's Combat with the Sea: A Canaanite Tradition in the Religion of Ancient Israel*, 1986; B. W. Anderson, *Creation Versus Chaos: The Reinterpretation of Mythical Symbolism in the Bible*, 1987.

¹⁹ For a number of relevant studies, e.g., M. Liverani, *The Ideology of the Assyrian Empire*, in: M. T. Larsen (ed.), *Power and Propaganda: A Symposium on Ancient Empires*, 1979, 297–317; H. Tadmor, *History and Ideology in the Assyrian Royal Inscriptions*, in: F.M. Fales (ed.), *Assyrian Royal Inscriptions*, 1981, 13–33; C. Zaccagnini, *The Enemy in the Neo-Assyrian Royal Inscriptions: The ›Ethno-graphic‹ Description*, in: H.-J. Nissen/J. Renger (eds.), *Mesopotamien und seine Nachbarn*, 1987, 409–424; P. Machinist, *On Self-Consciousness in Mesopotamia*, in: S. N. Eisenstadt (ed.), *The Origins and Diversity of Axial Age Civilizations*, 1986, 183–202; W. Horowitz, *Mesopotamian Cosmic Geography*, 1998; D. Vanderhooft, *The Neo-Babylonian Empire and Babylon in the Latter Prophets*, 1999; A. Kuhrt, ›Greeks‹ and ›Greece‹ in Mesopotamian and Persian Perspectives: J. L. Myres Memorial Lectures 21, 2002.

aged the world and in bringing harmony, which required obedience to the Persian king and Ahura-Mazda.²⁰

Similarly, the Exodus story implies the impossibility of committing to the law of Yahweh in a land of chaos. Instead, Israel needed to resettle in the realm of the cosmic order, which lay within the borders of the later Persian Empire.²¹

The consolidation of imperial power in the southern frontier of the Fifth Satrapy during the first half of the fourth century BCE provided an occasion for Judahite priesthood to present a canonized version of the Pentateuch.²² The essential materials had already been compiled in the form of the Hexateuch. The pentateuchal redaction, however, which conferred canonicity on a fundamentally anti-Egyptian book anticipated imperial expectations and effectively prevented the imposition of what might have been unfavorable imperial obligations on Judahite subjects. The power over the province of Judah was left in the hands of the priests.

Thanks to skillfully emphasized anti-Egyptian stances in the canonized version of the Pentateuch,²³ the very act of belonging to Judah may

²⁰ A. Kuhrt, *The Achaemenid Persian Empire: Continuities, Adaptations, Transformations*, in: S. E. Alcock, *et al.* (eds.), *Empires*, 2001, 93–123; Briant, *From Cyrus to Alexander*, 165–203, *passim*; J. Wiesehöfer, *From Achaemenid Imperial Order to Sasanian Diplomacy: War, Peace and Reconciliation in pre-Islamic Iran*, in: K. Raaflaub (ed.), *War and Peace in the Ancient World*, 2007, 121–140; J. L. Berquist, *Resistance and Accommodation in the Persian Empire*, in: R. A. Horsley (ed.), *In the Shadow of Empire: Reclaiming the Bible as a History of Faithful Resistance*, 2008, 41–58. For Egyptian concept of cosmic order, the *Ma'at*, that should be maintained by legitimate and righteous ruler, see J. Assmann, *Ma'at: Gerechtigkeit und Unsterblichkeit im Alten Ägypten*, 1990.

²¹ One might consider a notion of »inclusive monotheism« (cf. T. Thompson, *The Intellectual Matrix of Early Biblical Narrative: Inclusive Monotheism in Persian Period Palestine*, in: D. V. Edelman (ed.), *The Triumph of Elohim: From Yahwisms to Judaisms*, 1995, 107–126). Following this, it has been suggested that Yahweh's identification with the God of the heaven (אלהי השמים) can be taken as local manifestation of Ahura-Mazda (e.g., T. M. Bolin, *The Temple of יהוה at Elephantine and Persian Religious Policy*, in: Edelman (ed.), *The Triumph of Elohim*, 127–144; J. M. Trotter, *Reading Hosea in Achaemenid Yehud*, 2001, 151–153). This view, however, remains highly speculative.

²² R. Achenbach, *Satrapie, Medinah und lokale Hierokratie. Zum Einfluss der Statthalter der Achämenidenzeit auf Tempelwirtschaft und Tempelordnungen*, ZABR 16 (2010), 105–144.

²³ Cf. J. Assmann, *Moses the Egyptian: The Memory of Egypt in Western Monotheism*, 1997. On the other hand, one should consider an intended appeal of the certain parts of the Pentateuch to the Diaspora element, anticipated by Moses' death outside the Promised Land. For certain parts of the pan-Judahite community the importance of »Joseph cycle,« where Egypt is portrayed rather favorably, made its exclusion probably impossible. However, as properly emphasized by Greifenhagen, these traditions were subverted by the dominant voice of the central anti-Egyptian narrative (Greifenhagen, *Egypt on the Pentateuch's Ideological Map*, 35–49, *passim*). Besides, since the anti-Egyptian stance appears only after a new king arose over Egypt, the one who did not know Joseph

have signaled to the Persian authorities that they were dealing with loyal and law-obeying subjects.²⁴ The issue of loyalty was acute. After the Egyptian fiasco, many at the Achaemenid court would have feared additional rebellions in which the Fifth Satrapy would cooperate with the Egyptians. Indeed, throughout the centuries Judah and its neighbors relied on Egyptian support against the incursions of Mesopotamian rule. Egypt was not only considered a natural ally in any conspiracy against neo-Assyrian or neo-Babylonian rule; it also provided a place of refuge in times of danger.²⁵ One may interpret the anti-Egyptian message of the Pentateuch against this backdrop, and the Persian authorities likely appreciated the point.²⁶ The anti-Egyptian narrative of course could not completely prevent Judahite participation in anti-Persian alliances. Yet the fact remains that during this period Judah appears to have avoided

(Ex 1,8), there is no contradiction to our scenario, since the allegory between the arising of a new evilness king and the Egyptian rebellion against the Persian rule is detectable. The inclusion of Joseph story within the Pentateuchal corpus, however, may also reflect a much later reality, where an old tale apparently receives a new meaning. Scholars who considered the *Josephgeschichte* as an independent literary composition have offered a variety of often contradictory views concerning its date, origin and purpose. The literature on this topic is rather extensive (e.g., R. de Hoop, *Genesis 49 in its Literary and Historical Context*, 1999, 366–450, *passim*; Y. Levin, *Joseph, Judah and the Benjamin Conundrum*, *ZAW* 116 [2004], 223–241). Without embarking on a lengthy discussion, all we can say in the framework of the present endeavor is that one should consider the possibility that the *Josephgeschichte* was added to the proto-canonized version of the Pentateuch at the beginning of the Ptolemaic rule over the Land of Israel, with the aim to justify the renewed flourishing of the Jewish community in Egypt (below).

²⁴ This point is also communicated in the money that represented the Great Achaemenid King; cf. e.g., Gitler, *Identities of the Indigenous Coinages of Palestine under Achaemenid Rule*, 105–119.

²⁵ G. M. Galvin, *Egypt as a Place of Refuge*, 2011, 65–117. The existence of the networks of spies, employed by the neo-Assyrian court to communicate with provincial officials during the eighth and the seventh centuries BCE, was recently surveyed in detail (see P. Dubovský, *Hezekiah and the Assyrian Spies: Reconstruction of the Neo-Assyrian Intelligence Services and its Significance for II Kings 18–19*, 2006). It is plausible to assume that the neo-Babylonian court took advantage of the accumulated intelligence as well, and that the Persian court possessed enough information concerning unfaithful behavior of local subjects that crafted conspiracies with Egypt in the past.

²⁶ Greifenhagen's thoughtful analysis of Egypt portrayed on the Pentateuch's ideological map, which emphasizes Jewish loyalty to the Persian government over its political challenger, is close in certain aspects to our reconstruction. However, Greifenhagen's thesis is flawed due to the fact that he based his archaeological/historical reconstruction on mistakenly interpreted archaeological material, as discussed in Part I of this article. This resulted in suggesting too broad a date, ca. 450–350 BCE, for the canonization of the Pentateuch (Greifenhagen, *Egypt on the Pentateuch's Ideological Map*, 224).

any participation in Egyptian orchestrated anti-Persian coalitions.²⁷ Furthermore, during the preliminary stages of Alexander the Great's campaign, Judah remained faithful to Darius III even after he fled back to Persia (after the Battle of Issus).²⁸

Finally, we may consider the possibility that the canonization of the Former Prophets, which was well under way already during the third century BCE, can be associated with the geopolitical transformations Palestine underwent under Ptolemaic rule. It seems that at a certain point during the Early Hellenistic period, significant changes could not be made to the canonical structure of the Pentateuch. Starting the process of canonization the Former Prophets, with its more nuanced approaches toward Egypt, may be considered perhaps as an initial attempt to justify the presence of Judahite communities in Egypt. The process stands in connection with a large body of apologetic literature that was written either as a way of defending the persistence of these Egyptian-Jewish communities while an independent Jewish life existed under the Hasmonean kingdom or in dispute with Greek or Egyptian authors on the ancient roots of the Jewish nation and its place in Egyptian history.²⁹

It stands to reason that the Syrian Wars and especially those of the first half of the third century BCE (First and Second Syrian Wars), when Palestine and Judah were under direct Ptolemaic domination, reoriented Judahite and Jerusalemite attention to Egypt. It is worth noting that Jerusalem was virtually the only mint that continued to strike silver fractions on the Attic weight standard under the Diadochi and especially under Ptolemy I and II,³⁰ while the Lagid kings were promoting the use of bronze coinage with a similar range of values.³¹ These silver coins most probably served as temple-money like their Late Persian-period predecessors. More interesting is the fact that Jerusalem was apparently deprived

²⁷ Although it has been alleged that the Tennes rebellion around the middle of the fourth century BCE was of great importance for Judah (D. Barag, *The Effects of the Tennes Rebellion on Palestine*, *BASOR* 183 [1966], 6–12), this view has been rightly challenged (e.g., L.L. Grabbe, *A History of the Jews and Judaism in the Second Temple Period*, 1. *Yehud: A History of the Persian Province in Judah*, 2004, 346–349; Fantalkin/Tal, *Re-dating Lachish level I*, 189, n. 22).

²⁸ Josephus, *Ant* XI, 317–319.

²⁹ E.g., B. Bar-Kochva, *Pseudo-Hecataeus on the Jews: Legitimizing the Jewish Diaspora*, 1996; E. S. Gruen, *The Use and Abuse of the Exodus Story*, *JH* 12 (1998), 94–122.

³⁰ Ronen, *Some Observations on the Coinage of Yehud*, 30–31. After the Greco-Macedonian conquest the weight standard of the provincial coinage of Judah changed, when the *grh* and half-*grh* were replaced by fractions of the *obol* on the Attic weight standard with a modal weight of 0.19 g for the quarter-*obol*.

³¹ These issues show a clear Ptolemaic iconographic influence (e.g., Meshorer, *A Treasury of Jewish Coins*, Nos. 29–35; Gitler/Lorber, *Ptolemaic Yehud Coinage*, Group 5, and are dated from circa 301–261/260 BCE).

of minting rights once the coastal cities of Ptolemais, Iopé and Gaza were granted these rights in Ptolemy II's 25th regnal year (261/260 BCE).³² The reasons for this change are not clear.³³ It may be related to the strategic organization of the Second Syrian War (260–253 BCE), as can be inferred from the major administrative reforms Ptolemy II initiated in the region in the same year (261/260 BCE). These reforms include the »re-foundation« of the coastal cities of Ptolemais, Iopé and Gaza, as well as the establishment of inland centers such as Beth-Shean (renamed Scythopolis), Beth-Yerah (renamed Philoteria – after his sister), and Rabbat-Ammon (renamed Philadelphia after Ptolemy II's pseudonym). It is possible that Jerusalem's forfeiture of minting rights in 261/260 BCE, which cut a major source of income to the priestly class and called for the reorganization of the temple »moneyed-economy« may be seen as additional trigger for the canonization of the Prophets, while Jerusalemites strived to regain minting (and probably other) rights by displaying a more sympathetic attitude towards Egypt and the Ptolemaic kingdom. This attitude is reflected in a number of the narratives of the Former Prophets, especially in the Books of Kings.³⁴

Summing up the major points of the current endeavor, the canonization of the Pentateuch should not be seen solely as a result of inner-societal compromises between different Judahite groups in the Persian period. This approach tends to underestimate the crucial importance of contemporary geopolitical factors. Indeed, major theological reforms, be it the reforms of Josiah or the reforms of Luther, were most often undertaken in response to macro changes. The canonization of the Pentateuch in the first half of the fourth century BCE, therefore, should be seen as an essential tool in re-shaping the identity of Judahite postexilic communities in response to a new Persian Empire that no longer included Egypt in its realm. Yet even if we have failed to convince the readers, we hope to have illustrated that our interdisciplinary approach of merging the in-

³² For the sake of our argument his first regnal year started in 285/284 BCE, although it is known that he inherited the throne only in 282 BCE but later backdated his regnal count to 285/284 BCE, while he was co-regent with his father Ptolemy I.

³³ This seems to be the case only if one accepts Gitler's and Lorber's, Ptolemaic Yehud Coinage, revised chronology which is based on justified stylistic considerations. On the »foundations/re-foundations« and their meaning, see O. Tal, »Hellenistic Foundations« in Palestine, in: L.L. Grabbe/O. Lipschits (eds.), *Judah between East and West: The Transition from Persian to Greek Rule* (ca. 400–200 BCE), 2011, 242–254.

³⁴ This issue is beyond the scope of the current paper and should be dealt with thoroughly elsewhere (e.g., Galvin, *Egypt as a Place of Refuge*, 111–146). The possibility that the *Josephgeschichte* was added to the proto-canonized Pentateuch only in the early Hellenistic period, in order to justify the maintenance of prosperous Jewish community in Egypt, should be taken into consideration.

sights of redaction criticism with archaeologically-based historical analysis constitutes a long-needed corrective to, and one of the most promising directions for, the field of pentateuchal studies.

The canonization of the Pentateuch has preoccupied scholars from different disciplines from antiquity to the present. However, two major questions still require an explanation: when did it happen and why did it happen? In this two-part article an attempt has been made to clarify these issues. Based on an interdisciplinary approach, where the insights of redaction criticism are merged with archaeologically-supported historical analysis, we suggest that the inception of the Torah-canonization should be viewed within the framework of the geopolitical transformation that characterized the first half of the fourth century BCE, when, following a major Egyptian rebellion, Egypt was no longer a part of the Persian Empire, while southern Palestine became the empire's frontier for the first time in more than a century of Achaemenid rule. The canonization of the essentially anti-Egyptian version of the Torah in the early fourth century BCE should be considered as a conscious response of Jerusalem's priestly circles to this new reality, signaling to the imperial authorities that they are dealing with loyal subjects that consider Egypt as a world of chaos, an antithesis to the world of cosmic order, so central to Persian imperial self-understanding.

La canonisation du Pentateuque a préoccupé les chercheurs depuis l'antiquité jusqu'à nos jours. Deux questions demeurent cependant: quand et pourquoi s'est-elle produite? Cette étude en deux parties tente de répondre à ces questions. A partir d'une approche interdisciplinaire, qui combine les résultats de la critique rédactionnelle avec une analyse historique fondée sur les données archéologiques, la solution suivante est proposée: le début de la canonisation de la Torah se situe dans le cadre des changements géopolitiques qui marquent la première moitié du 4ème siècle av. J.-C. A la suite d'un vaste soulèvement, l'Egypte ne faisait plus partie de l'empire perse, alors que la Palestine du sud formait, pour la première fois depuis plus d'un siècle de domination achéménide, la frontière méridionale de l'empire. La canonisation de la version essentiellement anti-égyptienne de la Torah du début du 4ème siècle doit être comprise comme une réponse consciente des prêtres de Jérusalem à cette nouvelle situation politique. Ils indiquent ainsi à l'administration perse qu'ils sont des sujets loyaux qui considèrent l'Egypte comme une puissance du chaos, à l'inverse de l'ordre cosmique qui caractérise l'auto-compréhension de l'empire perse.

Die Kanonisierung des Pentateuch hat Gelehrte verschiedener Disziplinen von der Antike bis in die Gegenwart beschäftigt. Dennoch harren zwei wichtige Fragen noch immer der Erklärung: Wann hat sie sich ereignet, und warum? In diesem zweiteiligen Artikel wird der Versuch unternommen, diese Fragen zu klären. Basierend auf einem interdisziplinären Ansatz, der die Erkenntnisse der Redaktionskritik mit einer archäologisch fundierten historischen Analyse verbindet, schlagen die Autoren vor, dass der Beginn der Kanonisierung der Tora im Zusammenhang der geopolitischen Veränderungen zu sehen ist, welche die erste Hälfte des 4. Jh. v. Chr. prägten. Ägypten war in Folge eines größeren Aufstandes nicht mehr Teil des persischen Großreiches, während der Süden Palästinas erstmals nach mehr als einem Jahrhundert achämenidischer Herrschaft die Reichsgrenze bildete. Die Kanonisierung der wesentlich anti-ägyptischen Version der Tora im frühen 4. Jh. v. Chr. kann als eine bewusste Antwort der Jerusalemer Priester auf diese neue politische Situation verstanden werden. Diese signalisieren der persischen Verwaltung, dass sie loyale Untertanen sind, die Ägypten als eine Chaosmacht betrachten, als Gegenbild der kosmischen Ordnung, die für das Selbstverständnis des persischen Reiches zentral ist.